

“Meet the Luthier” Rich Chaffins

By Duane M. Evarts



Rich Chaffins wants to build you a one-of-a-kind instrument!

His company based in West Virginia is called AGAPE Guitars. It's pronounced “uh-GAH-pay” not “a-Gape”. *Agape is a Greek term for selfless, sacrificial and unconditional love, whereas “a-Gape” is defined as an adjective referring to the mouth wide open, especially with surprise or wonder.* Perhaps in this instance both definitions apply because of the love Rich pours into every one of his guitars and the fact that this love results in jaw-dropping masterpieces!



The first thing you should know is that Rich is a custom builder with a caveat or two. The biggest caveat is that he's not particularly interested in making a guitar that's just a clone of someone else's design. In other words: Rich is not going to build you a gold top Les Paul, or Clapton's Strat, or Randy Rhoads's polka dot Flying V. That kind of guitar making simply doesn't motivate him. And of course, you do want your luthier to be motivated about making your instrument... don't you?



Any of his models can be customized in virtually any workable configuration you can imagine. For example, if you like his “Protos” shape, but you'd love it with a 24-3/4" scale length; or if you'd like an 8-string, 27" scale “Salome” with three pickups and a piezo, just about anything that starts with *“I'd love this guitar, but can you?...”* is do-able. Also, if you have dreamed up a design that doesn't look or sound like anything you've seen before, Rich can make it a reality. He's comfortable working with scalloped frets and has even built a guitar with 51 frets. That's an accomplishment!!!

A few other things about his guitar building philosophy that you might want to know: he loves beautiful woods and prefers to use local woods whenever possible. He also feels strongly that:

“Minor cosmetic imperfections are things of beauty and reflect us as imperfect, yet beautiful beings... I will often leave them, especially when they speak to me about certain aspects of the human condition”.

As you might imagine, he doesn't like painting guitars, believes big fat necks sound better and that locking tuners are an improvement on the original design.

“I do certain things for aesthetic purposes, some for playability, some for artistic purposes”.

Rich builds every guitar and bass to work with his clients against them. In addition to building guitars, Rich offers private guitar lessons to students in West Virginia.

If Rich is the custom builder for you, contact him at: rich@agapeguitars.com

